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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC//DDI/OEA//
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//FPA//
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RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DB-Z//
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 9658
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5796
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RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 0643
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 4320
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RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 6509
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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; April 30, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo

ROK's First "Presumed" Swine Flu Patient Acted "Wisely;" Feeling Flu Symptoms, She Isolated Herself at Home and Reported Her Illness to Local Health Center

JoongAng Ilbo, Dong-a Ilbo, Hankook Ilbo, Segye Ilbo, Seoul Shinmun, All TVs

Ruling GNP Suffers Crushing Defeat in By-Elections; GNP Fails to Secure Even a Single Seat in Five Legislative Seats Up for Grabs

Hankyoreh Shinmun

GNP's Crushing Defeat a Warning against Lee Myung-bak Administration's "Go-it-Alone" Approach

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

ROK health authorities said yesterday that 16 more people are suspected of having contracted swine flu following the first "presumed" case detected in a patient who returned from a trip to Mexico. (All)

The Minister for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Chang Tae-pyong, said during an April 29 press meeting that the ROKG has no plan to halt imports of pork from North America because there is strong scientific evidence that pork is not a carrier of influenza. (Hankyoreh, Seoul)

U.S. Ambassador to the ROK Kathleen Stephens yesterday opened Habib House, the Seoul residence of the U.S. Ambassador, to the press to introduce new art pieces on display under the State Department's Art in Embassies Program. (Chosun, JoongAng, Maeil Kyungje)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

North Korea's Foreign Ministry threatened yesterday to conduct nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests unless the UN Security Council (UNSC) withdraws and apologizes for its recent sanctions on the North. (All)

North Korea also warned that it will build a light-water nuclear

reactor and begin to develop nuclear fuel technology. (All)

Given that enriched uranium produces nuclear fuel for a light-water reactor, this statement might indicate that North Korea will embark on a uranium enrichment program. (Chosun, Hankook)

The ROKG responded by warning that all responsibility for the [North's] worsening international situation lies completely with North Korea. The ROKG urged the North to stop taking actions that threaten international peace, to abide by the UN Security Council resolutions and [presidential] statement, and to return to the Six-Party Talks. (Hankook)

Experts speculated that North Korea could conduct a second nuclear test at any time because of the country's presumed possession of several nuclear warheads. (Chosun)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-North Korea

The ROK media gave play to North Korea's April 29 threat to conduct nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) tests unless the UN Security Council (UNSC) withdraws and apologizes for its recent sanctions on the North.

The ROK media also noted the communist state's statement that it

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will build a light-water nuclear reactor and begin to develop nuclear fuel technology. The ROK media interpreted this statement to mean that North Korea will embark on a uranium enrichment program, as enriched uranium produces nuclear fuel for a light-water reactor.

According to media reports, the ROKG responded by warning that all responsibility for the worsening international situation lies completely with North Korea. The ROKG was further quoted as stating: "We urge North Korea to stop taking actions that threaten international peace, to abide by the UN Security Council resolutions and [presidential] statement, and to return to the Six-Party Talks."

Conservative Chosun Ilbo analyzed that North Korea could conduct a second nuclear test at any time because it is known to have several nuclear warheads. Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo viewed this North Korean move as aimed at "making its presence felt" in the face of Washington's strategy of neglect [towards the North.]

-Swine Flu

Citing ROK health authorities, the ROK media reported that 16 more people are suspected of having contracted swine flu following the first "presumed" case detected in a patient who returned from a trip to Mexico.

Most ROK media quoted the Minister for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries during an April 29 press meeting that the ROKG has no plan to halt imports of pork from North America because there is strong scientific evidence that pork is not a carrier of influenza.

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo commented in its editorial: "It is preposterous to avoid eating pork, because eating pork has nothing to do with swine flu. When the mad cow disease scare raged in the country, innocent cattle farmers were hard hit by the sharp decline in beef consumption. With the economy already in bad shape, we cannot afford to again let unfounded prejudice damage pig farmers and pork-related industries."

Conservative Dong-a Ilbo, in an article entitled "Swine Flu Feared to Damage Already Battered World Economy," noted each country's efforts to impose travel restrictions to North America and to ban imports of pork from the region, while raising the possibility of diplomatic conflicts developing between countries.

STEPHENS